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**SPECIAL EDITION:
FOCUS ON COMDEX**

Comdex/Fall 94 lived up to its reputation as the "biggest computer show in the world" — with multimedia no longer a novelty, but a ubiquitous presence at this the multi-site monster of a show. With so many significant announcements and such a wealth of multimedia-related news, we felt a special "Comdex Edition" of the Monitor was in order. Here are the highlights:

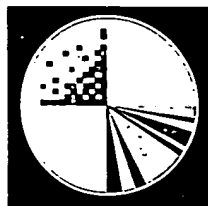
- **Multimedia Mecca:** John Latta brings us this analysis of the two keynote addresses by Bill Gates and Andy Grove, and takes a special look at trends in 3D .. 6
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File: USPS multimedia MONITOR

SINCE 1983, THE NEWSLETTER OF RECORD FOR THE INTERACTIVE MULTIMEDIA INDUSTRY

The Government Connection

Washington DC, 7 November 1994 — The US Postal Service has released a request for proposals (RFP) for development of a major kiosk application that goes far beyond basic postal functions to provide access to information about a wide variety of government services. The stated purpose of *The Government Connection Intergovernmental Kiosk Program* is "to deploy an integrated government services system on a national platform and/or network of kiosk stations which provides the American public with the means to transact business with: local, state, tribal, and federal agencies and service providers."

The two-phase contract calls for an initial Phase I pilot test of 12 units in Washington DC, followed by a market test of 100 additional units in Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Iowa, and Colorado. Based on Phase I results, the USPS or other agencies could proceed to a Phase II roll out of as many as 12,000 units to Post Offices and other public locations.

Each kiosk is to include: a 90+ MHz 32-bit main processor; two hard drives — one 240 MB+ and the other 1 GB+; 17" or larger non-interlaced touch-screen display with 24-bit color and 1,024 x 768 pixel resolution; bank card reader; smart card reader; printer and dispenser; minimum 14.4 Kbps communications subsystem; PCMCIA Type III slot; application/presentation software suite; and a utility software suite including Internet-standard TCP/IP communications protocols.

The RFP cites as "highly desirable" that the digital video playback functions be supported by a separate dedicated processing engine, so as not to unduly burden the main processor. It also suggests that if a CD-ROM drive is included, it must be a minimum quad-speed with multi-session, Photo CD, and CD-ROM XA compatibility. Other options include a customer detection device and electronic signature pad, and space must be provided for the possible future addition of a CD-ROM jukebox.

Just to cover all the bases, allowance is to be made for myriad future enhancements, such as voice recognition, video capture, fax, optical character recognition, telephone, and — last but

not least — actual postage vending. Units are to be wheelchair-accessible and are to provide a "feeling of security and privacy for the user." The contract will include system maintenance and new application integration for five years.

Example interactive multimedia applications cited in the RFP include such categories as: searching and applying for jobs; filling out applications for licenses and benefits; printing forms from a variety of government agencies such as the IRS, VA, and Social Security; ordering and paying for documents and products; electronic benefit distribution; tourism and vacation services; requests for specific, personal information; and general "who, what, where" government service information.

According to USPS spokesman Mark Saunders, the new kiosks are not mere retreads of the now-defunct Postal Buddy system (*Monitor 11/94 p7*), which he said suffered from poor service and disappointing revenues. "We plan on installing in agencies and places of business outside the local post offices," Saunders said. The results of the initial market tests will be factors in determining the kiosk's content, "which is sure to cover more than change-of-address fulfillment and stamp sales," he added.

While the scope of the service is rather expansive, funding is still undetermined. The USPS is weighing options ranging from full government funding to private sponsorship in which the units are leased to commercial locations such as shopping malls. Proposals are due by 17 January 1995 (*Solicitation #102590-94-A-0011*, Andrew Jernell, USPS, Procurement, Room 4541, 475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington DC 20260-6230, 202/268-4172, Internet — <http://www.usps.gov>).

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